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Magnus - A Trumped Suit. 1902.

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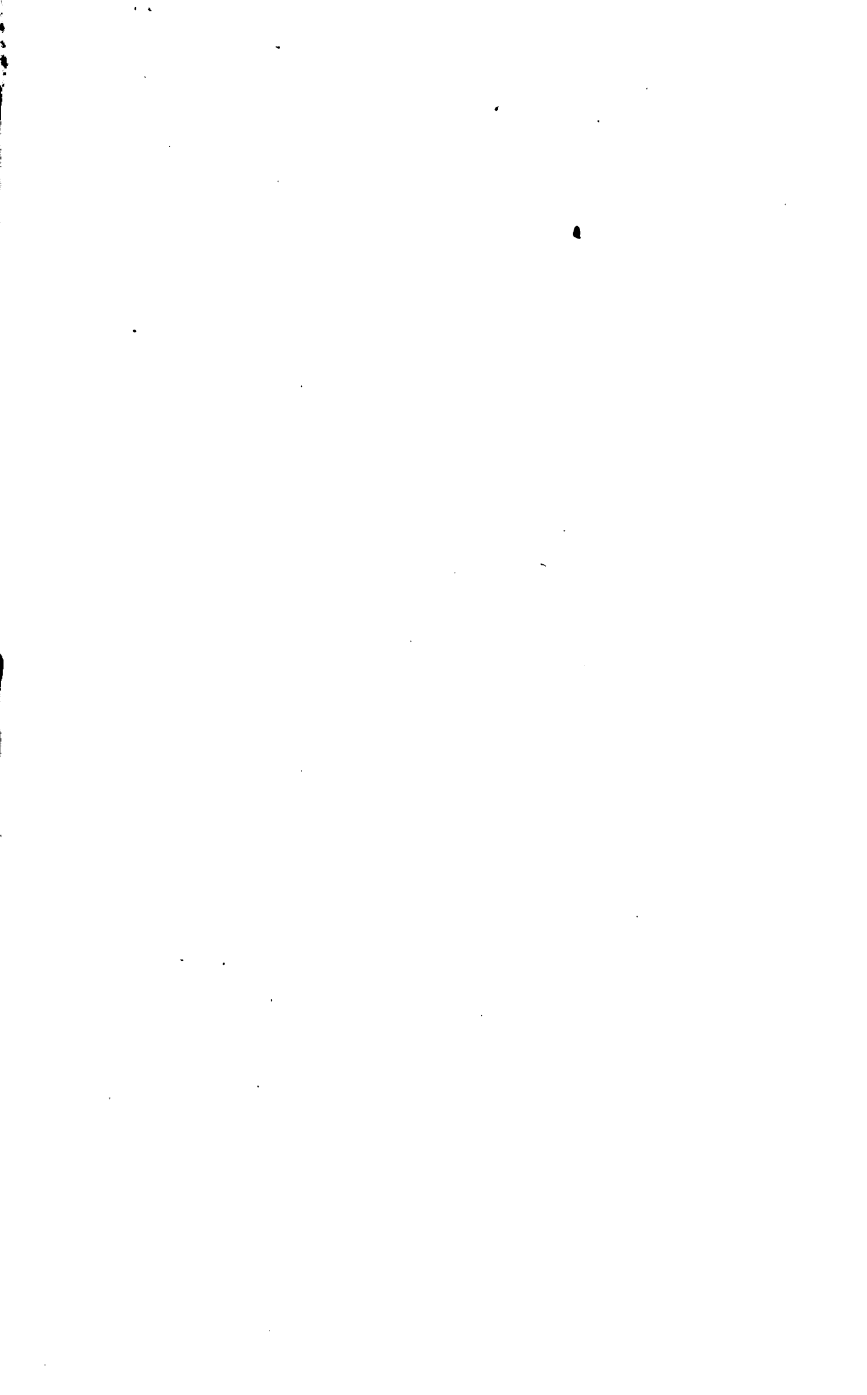
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A TRUMPED SUIT

A Comedy in One Act

BY

JULIAN MAGNUS

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CHARACTERS.

M. CARBONEL.

VICTOR DELILLE.

ANATOLE GARADOUX.

CÉCILE, *Carbonel's daughter.*

ANNETTE, *chambermaid.*

[The French original of this play is "*Les Deux Timides*,"
written by M. Eugène Labiche.]

A TRUMPED SUIT.

SCENE. Salon in a country house near Paris.

Large doors at back supposed to open on a garden. Door L. I. E. Doors L. 2 E. and R. 2 E. Mantelpiece R. Clock and vases on mantel. Table with writing materials L. R., a small ornamental table. Small sideboard against wall L. Usual furniture of a handsome salon.

At rise of curtain, Annette, with hot-water jug in her hand, comes from back, opens door L. 2 E., and deposits the jug within.

ANNETTE.

Monsieur, there is the hot water. [*Comes front.*] This M. Anatole Garadoux, mademoiselle's intended, is what I call queer. He wouldn't suit me at all. Every morning, he takes an hour and a half to dress himself and polish his nails—that is, half an hour to dress, and an hour to trim his nails. He has a case of little instruments, and cuts, and scrapes, and grinds, and rubs, and files, *and* powders, *and* polishes—what a housemaid he'd have

been if Fate hadn't spoiled him at the start ! I don't know what M. Carbonel can have seen in him ! Oh, my ! I suppose master could no more say "no" to him than he can to any one about anything. It's absurd that a man of his age should have no more will than a baby. He hasn't any more firmness than jelly in the sunshine ! His daughter makes up for him, though. With all her sweetly innocent, yielding manner, she has her own way when she wants it. [*Cécile is heard singing in the garden.*] She's coming back from her morning walk.

CÉCILE, *entering at back with a lot of cut flowers in her apron.*

Annette, bring the vases.

ANNETTE, *taking vases to table.*

Yes, mademoiselle. [*They busy themselves arranging the flowers.*] He's getting up. I have just taken in the hot water.

CÉCILE.

To whom ?

ANNETTE.

To M. Garadoux.

CÉCILE.

What does that matter to me ?

ANNETTE.

Have you noticed his nails ?

CÉCILE, *curtly*.

No !

ANNETTE.

Not noticed his nails ! Why they're as long as that. But the other day, in trying to open a window, he broke one.

CÉCILE, *ironically*.

Poor nail !

ANNETTE.

To be sure, it will gròw again—in time ; but wasn't he cross ? Since then, he has always rung for me to open the window.

CÉCILE.

I have already had to ask you not to be for ever talking to me about M. Garadoux—it is disagreeable ! it annoys me !

ANNETTE, *astonished*.

Your intended !

CÉCILE.

Intended, yes ; but intentions don't always lead to—marriage. Where is papa ?

[*Replaces vase on mantel.*]

ANNETTE.

In his study ; he's been there more than an hour with a gentleman who came from Paris—

CÉCILE, *quickly*.

From Paris? A young man—a lawyer?
Blond—very quiet manner—blue eyes?

ANNETTE.

No. This one is dark, has mustaches—and a beard like a blacking-brush.

CÉCILE, *disappointed*.

Ah!

ANNETTE.

I fancy he's a traveler for a wine-merchant. Your father didn't want to see him, but he managed to squeeze through the door with his bottles.

CÉCILE.

Why doesn't papa send him away?

ANNETTE.

M. Carbonel? He's too timid to do that.
[*Places other vase on mantel.*]

CÉCILE.

I am afraid he is.

CARBONEL, *speaking outside R. 2 E.*

Monsieur, it is I who am indebted to you—delighted! [*Enters with two small bottles.*] I didn't want it, but I have bought four casks.

CÉCILE.

You have bought more wine ?

ANNETTE.

The cellar is full.

[*Goes up.*]

CARBONEL.

I know it ; but how could I say “no” to a man who was so nicely dressed—who had just come twelve miles—on purpose to offer me his wine ? In fact, he put himself to great inconvenience to come here.

CÉCILE.

But it's you he has inconvenienced.

ANNETTE, *at back.*

The great point is, is the wine good.

CARBONEL.

Taste it.

ANNETTE, *after pouring some into glass which she takes from sideboard, drinks, and utters cry of disgust.*

CARBONEL.

That's exactly how it affected me. I even ventured to say to him—with extreme politeness —“Your wine seems to me a little young” ; but I was afraid he was beginning to feel vexed—so I took four casks—only four !

ANNETTE, *taking the samples.*

Well, I'll use these for salads. [*Bell heard L.*]
That's M. Garadoux ringing for mé to open his
window. [*Exit L. 2 E.*]

CARBONEL.

What ! has M. Garadoux only just got up ?

CÉCILE.

Yes, he never appears before ten o'clock.

CARBONEL.

That doesn't astonish me. Every evening he
seizes my paper, as soon as it is left, and takes it
to his own room. I believe he reads himself to
sleep.

CÉCILE.

And you don't see it ?

CARBONEL.

Oh, yes, I do—the next day.

CÉCILE.

This is too bad.

CARBONEL.

I own I miss it ; and if you could manage to
give him a hint—without its seeming to come from
me—

CÉCILE.

I'll give him a hint he can't misunderstand.

CARBONEL.

What ! you're not afraid ?

CÉCILE, *firmly*.

Afraid—of a man who wants to be my husband ?
Should I have agreed to think about him, if I was ?

CARBONEL.

I admire your spirit—and you only eighteen.
You're braver than I. The visit of this stranger
worries and bothers me.

CÉCILE.

Poor papa !

CARBONEL.

Thank Heaven, it will soon be over !

CÉCILE.

What ?

CARBONEL.

Why, all these visitors with their eternal offers.
They make me ill. What can you expect ? I
have passed my life in the Archive Office—in the
Secret Department. No one was ever admitted
there. That exactly suited me. Now I can't bear
to talk to people I don't know.

CÉCILE.

Then you know M. Garadoux well ?

CARBONEL.

Not at all ; my lawyer recommends him high-

ly, though, to be sure, he's only lately been my lawyer. M. Garadoux presented himself boldly—we talked for two hours—that is, I with difficulty managed to get in four words. He put questions, and answered himself—and, you see, I felt quite at my ease with him.

CÉCILE.

What were the four words you did get in ?

CARBONEL.

I promised him your hand—at least, he says so. Thereupon, he installed himself here—that was a fortnight ago ; and to-day we have to go to the mayor's office to publish the bans.

CÉCILE.

To-day ?

CARBONEL.

He fixed to-day—he settles everything.

CÉCILE.

But, papa—

CARBONEL.

Well ?

CÉCILE.

Do you like this M. Garadoux ?

CARBONEL.

He seems a very nice young man—and he can talk by the hour together.

CÉCILE.

He's a widower ; and I don't want a second-hand husband.

CARBONEL.

But—

CÉCILE.

Never mind your *but*. Listen to my *but*, which is, Suppose another suitor should appear ?

CARBONEL.

What ! Another !! More talking ; more inquiries—begin all over again ? No ! No !! No !!!

[Sits L. of table.

CÉCILE.

The one I mean is not a stranger—you know him well—M. Victor Delille, a lawyer—

CARBONEL.

A lawyer ! I never could bear to talk to a lawyer.

CÉCILE.

He is godmamma's nephew.

CARBONEL, *testily*.

I don't know him. I have never seen him.

CÉCILE.

Oh, papa ! I thought godmamma had written to you—

CARBONEL.

That was three months ago—before Garadoux came. It was only a faint suggestion ; and since this Garadoux presented himself, I don't believe the other has ever thought of you.

CÉCILE.

Oh, yes, papa. I am sure he has.

CARBONEL.

Oh, indeed ! So you are sure, are you ? Come here. Tell me frankly what has he said to you.

CÉCILE, *sitting on his knee.*

Nothing, papa !—that is, nothing about love. But on the day of aunt's birthday dinner—when you wouldn't go, you know—

CARBONEL.

I don't like parties—that is, when there are people there.

CÉCILE.

I was sitting next M. Delille—and he kept blushing, and doing awkward things.

CARBONEL, *aside.*

I can feel for him. [*Aloud*] What did he do ?

CÉCILE.

He broke a wine-glass.

CARBONEL.

That's a stupidity—not a symptom.

CÉCILE.

Afterward, when I asked 'him for water, he passed me the salt-cellar.

CARBONEL.

Perhaps he is deaf.

CÉCILE.

Oh, no, papa, he is not deaf ; he was nervous.

CARBONEL.

Well ?

CÉCILE.

Well, when a young man—a lawyer—accustomed to speak in public—gets nervous because he is near a young lady, why [*lowering her eyes*]—there must be some cause.

CARBONEL.

And this cause must have been love for you ?

CÉCILE, *rising*.

Oh, papa, suppose it was !

CARBONEL, *rising*.

If it had been, he would have come here. He has not come, so it was not love ; perhaps it was

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dyspepsia ! I am very glad he didn't appear, for, as matters stand with M. Garadoux—

ANNETTE, *entering at back.*

The postman just left this letter, monsieur.

[*Exit.*]

CÉCILE, *quickly.*

Godmamma's writing !

CARBONEL.

Don't get excited. Another invitation, I suppose. Why can't people leave me alone ? [*Reads*] "Dear M. Carbonel : Allow me to present to you M. Victor Delille, my nephew, about whom I spoke to you some months ago. He loves our dear Cécile—"

CÉCILE, *joyfully.*

I knew he did ! What did I tell you, papa ?

CARBONEL.

Here's a pretty dilemma ! [*Reads*] "His ardent desire is to obtain her hand. I had hoped to accompany him to-day, but illness prevents ; and he will therefore go to you alone."

CÉCILE.

He is coming here !

CARBONEL.

I shall go out at once.

CÉCILE, *reproachfully*.

Oh, papa !

CARBONEL.

What can I do ? I have given my word to M. Garadoux. You plunge me into unheard-of difficulties.

CÉCILE.

I'll extricate you, papa !

CARBONEL.

How ? What am I to do, badgered and bullied by two suitors ?

CÉCILE.

You sha'n't have two ; you must give M. Garadoux his dismissal.

CARBONEL.

I ! [*Seeing Garadoux entering from his room.*]
Hush ! here he is !

GARADOUX.

Good morning, dear papa !

CARBONEL, *bowing*.

Monsieur Garadoux—

GARADOUX, *bowing to Cécile*.

My charming *fiancée*, you are as fresh this morning as a bunch of cherries.

CÉCILE.

A pretty compliment to my freshness—on *other* mornings. [*She goes to table.*]

CARBONEL, *aside*.

She's in too great a hurry. [*Aloud*] My dear M. Garadoux, have you slept well ?

GARADOUX.

Excellently. [*To Cécile*] I am up a little late, perhaps.

CÉCILE.

I did not reproach you.

CARBONEL.

The fact is, you don't like the country in the morning. [*Quickly*] I don't mean to find fault.

GARADOUX.

I ? Where is there such a magnificent picture as Nature's awakening ? The flowers expand their petals ; the blades of grass raise their heads to salute the rising sun. [*He looks at his nails.*] The butterfly dries his wings, still moist with the kisses of night. [*Draws a small instrument from his pocket and begins to file a nail.*]

CÉCILE, *aside*.

He's making this a dressing-room.

GARADOUX, *continuing to use file.*

The busy bee commences his visits to the rose,
while the sweet-voiced linnet—

CÉCILE, *aside.*

Too much natural history ! [*Brusquely*]
What news was there in the paper ?

GARADOUX.

What paper ?

CÉCILE.

Last night's—you took it—papa wasn't able to
get a look at it.

CARBONEL, *aside.*

What nerve she has !

GARADOUX.

A thousand pardons, M. Carbonel. I took it
inadvertently.

CARBONEL.

It is not the slightest consequence.

GARADOUX, *taking paper from his pocket, offers
it to Carbonel.*

I haven't even unfolded it.

CARBONEL.

Oh, if you haven't read it, pray keep it, M.
Garadoux.

GARADOUX, *offering it.*

No, I beg you will—

CARBONEL, *refusing it.*

I entreat you to keep it.

GARADOUX.

Since you insist ! [*Puts it back in pocket, then goes to glass over mantel and adjusts his cravat.*]

CARBONEL, *aside.*

I should have liked, though, to see how stocks were going.

ANNETTE, *entering, hands card.*

This gentleman wants to see you.

CÉCILE, *coming quickly to Carbonel.*

A gentleman ! [*Looking at card.*] 'Tis he !

CARBONEL, *low.*

The devil ! And the other one here ! What is to be done ?

CÉCILE, *low.*

You can't send him away. [*Loud to Annette*]
Ask him to walk up ! [*Exit Annette.*]

GARADOUX.

A visitor ! Don't forget, father-in-law, that we have to be at the mayor's at noon.

CARBONEL.

Certainly ! Of course ! [*Low to Cécile*] Get him out of here.

CÉCILE.

Will you accompany me, M. Garadoux ?

GARADOUX.

Delighted—where ?

CÉCILE.

To water the flowers.

GARADOUX, *coldly*.

The sun is terribly hot.

CÉCILE.

The more reason not to keep the flowers waiting. Come !

GARADOUX.

Delighted !

CÉCILE, *aside*.

I'll make him break another nail !

[*Exeunt Cécile and Garadoux, at back.*]

CARBONEL, *alone*.

Was there ever such a situation ? One suitor accepted—staying here—and the other—a lawyer, too—how he will talk—he's sure to make me say what I don't mean. I know what I am—he'll

force me to say "Yes"—and then the other. Oh, if two affirmatives would only make a negative!

ANNETTE, *announcing at back.*

M. Delille.

[*Exit R.*

CARBONEL, *frightened.*

What shall I say to him? [*Looks at his clothes.*] Ah! Can't receive him in a dressing-gown. I'll go and put on a coat.

[*Disappears L. I. E., as Delille enters at back.*

DELILLE, *coming forward very timidly, bows low.*

Monsieur—madame—I have the honor— [*Looks round.*] What, no one! How glad I am! I do hate to meet any one. I positively shudder at the idea of seeing this father, who knows I want to take away his daughter. [*Warmly*] How I love her! Ever since that dinner when I broke a glass, I have been coming to this place every day to ask for her hand. I come by the mid-day train, but I can't summon up courage to ring the bell, and I go back by the next. Once I felt bold enough to ring, but then I ran away and hid round the corner. If this had been going to continue, I should have bought a commutation ticket. To-day I am brave; I have crossed the threshold—without my aunt, who was to have brought me, and now all alone I am going— [*Frightened*] Can

I do it? Is it possible to say to a man one doesn't know, "Give me your daughter to take to my house, and—" [*Shuddering.*] No! one can't do such things—at least, I can't. [*Suddenly*] If I ran away! No one has seen me! I will—I can return to-morrow—by the same train.

[*About to exit back, meets Cécile entering.*

DELILLE, *stopping.*

Too late!

CÉCILE, *pretending surprise.*

I'm not mistaken! M. Victor Delille.

DELILLE, *nervous.*

Yes, monsieur—that is, mademoiselle—

CÉCILE.

To what chance do we owe the honor of this call?

DELILLE.

A mere chance—I was going by—I was looking for a notary—I saw a bell—and I rang it—it was a mistake. [*Bowing.*] Mademoiselle, I have the honor to say good-by.

CÉCILE.

Pray wait; my father will be delighted to see you.

DELILLE.

Don't disturb him—some other time—

CÉCILE.

No, no ! He would scold me. Won't you sit down ?

DELILLE, *falling into chair.*

Thank you—I'm not tired. [*Pulls gloves on and off quickly.*]

CÉCILE, *aside.*

Poor fellow ! How nervous he is !

DELILLE, *aside.*

How pretty she is !

CÉCILE.

Will you excuse me if I fill my sugar-bowl ?
[*Goes to sideboard, where there is box of sugar and bowl.*]

DELILLE, *rising.*

If I am in your way, allow me to—

CÉCILE.

Not at all—if I might venture, I would ask you—

DELILLE.

What, mademoiselle ?

CÉCILE.

To hold the bowl for me.

DELILLE.

Enchanted ! [*He takes bowl.*] [*Aside*] If the father found us like this ! I must say something to her. I mustn't seem like an idiot. [*Aloud*] Mademoiselle Cecile !

CÉCILE, *encouragingly*.

Monsieur Victor ?

DELILLE, *hesitatingly*.

Your sugar is very white !

CÉCILE.

Like all sugars—

DELILLE, *tenderly*.

Oh, no ! Not like other sugars.

CÉCILE, *aside*.

Why does he want to talk about sugar ?

DELILLE, *aside*.

I have been too bold ! [*Aloud*] Is it cane or beet-root ?

CÉCILE.

I don't know the difference.

DELILLE.

There's a great deal ! One is—much more so than the other—

CÉCILE, *looking at him with wonder.*

Ah! thank you. [*Takes bowl from him and goes to sideboard.*]

DELILLE, *aside.*

Why the deuce did I go out of my depth in sugars?

CÉCILE, *seeing Carbonel entering L.*

Here is papa!

DELILLE.

Oh, Heavens!

CÉCILE.

Papa, this is M. Victor Delille. [*The two men are at opposite corners of the stage, and do not dare to look at one another.*]

CARBONEL, *aside.*

Here goes! [*Bowing.*] Monsieur—I am very glad—certainly—

DELILLE.

It is I—monsieur—who—am—certainly—

CARBONEL, *stealing a glance at him, aside.*

He looks very determined!

DELILLE, *aside.*

I wish I had got away!

CÉCILE.

You gentlemen have doubtless something to say to one another. I will leave you.

CARBONEL AND DELILLE.

No, no !

CÉCILE.

I must attend to my household duties. [*To Delille*] Sit down ! [*To Carbonel*] Sit down ! [*They both sit opposite each other.*] [*Low to Delille*] Be brave ! [*Low to Carbonel*] Be brave !
[*Exit L. I. E.*]

CARBONEL, *aside*.

Here we are alone, and he seems quite at his ease.

DELILLE, *aside*.

I never was so nervous. [*Aloud*] Monsieur—

CARBONEL.

Monsieur— [*Aside*] I know he's going to ask for her.

DELILLE.

You have no doubt received a letter from my aunt.

CARBONEL.

A charming lady ! How is she ?

DELILLE.

Very well, indeed—that is—except her rheumatism, which has kept her in bed for a week.

CARBONEL.

That's all right—I mean I hope it will be, soon.

DELILLE.

I trust so, with warmer weather—

CARBONEL, *quickly*.

My barometer is going up.

DELILLE.

And mine, too—how strange that our barometers should agree so well !

CARBONEL.

It will burn up my roses, though.

DELILLE.

You are fond of roses ?

CARBONEL.

Passionately. I cultivate them quite extensively.

DELILLE.

So do I.

CARBONEL.

That's all right. [*Aside*] So far we get on well.

DELILLE, *aside*.

He seems jovial ! Suppose I— [*Aloud, ris-*

ing, very nervous] In her letter—my aunt—informed you that I was coming—

CARBONEL, *aside, rising.*

He's going to do it! [*Aloud*] Well—you see—yes—but she did not clearly indicate the reason that—

DELILLE.

What! she did not write that I—

CARBONEL.

No, not a word about that.

DELILLE, *aside.*

The devil! Why, then—oh, this makes it ten times worse! [*Aloud, with great effort*] Monsieur—I tremble while I ask—

CARBONEL, *trying to turn the conversation.*

What a sun! Hot as fire! It will kill the roses.

DELILLE.

I put shades over mine. I tremble while I ask the favor—

CARBONEL, *as before.*

Will you have some wine?

DELILLE.

No, thank you! I was about to ask the favor of—

CARBONEL, *as before.*

So you, too, cultivate roses ?

DELILLE.

Yes ! Last year I exhibited the "Standard of Marengo."

CARBONEL.

And I the "Triumph of Avranches," three inches in diameter. Have you it ?

DELILLE.

No. Monsieur, I tremble while I—

CARBONEL, *offering snuff-box.*

Will you take a pinch ?

DELILLE.

No, thank you. I tremble while I ask you for—

CARBONEL, *firmly.*

What ?

DELILLE, *disconcerted.*

For one—who—a graft of the "Triumph."

CARBONEL, *quickly.*

What ! Certainly, my dear young friend, with the greatest pleasure— [*Going.*

DELILLE.

But, monsieur—

CARBONEL.

I'll put it in moss for you myself. [Going.

DELILLE, *aside*.

He won't stay. [*Aloud*] Monsieur Carbonel—

CARBONEL, *at door*.

With the greatest of pleasure—delighted—
[*Aside*] I got out of that well! [*Exit at back*.

DELILLE.

He's gone—and I haven't said a word. Idiot !
beast ! fool ! ass !

CÉCILE, *entering gayly, at back*.

Well, Monsieur Victor !

DELILLE, *aside, mournfully*.

Now it's her turn !

CÉCILE.

Have you had a talk with papa ?

DELILLE.

Yes, mademoiselle—

CÉCILE.

And are you satisfied with your interview ?

DELILLE.

Enchanted ! The best proof is that he has gone to fetch what I asked for—

CÉCILE, *naively*.

Then he's looking for me ?

DELILLE.

No, not you ; some grafts of roses.

CÉCILE, *astonished*.

Grafts !

DELILLE.

Yes, mademoiselle—for a quarter of an hour we talked about nothing but roses.

CÉCILE.

But why was that ?

DELILLE.

Because—because I am the victim of a dreadful infirmity—I am timid.

CÉCILE.

You, too ?

DELILLE.

Timid to the verge of idiocy ! Can you believe it ? I could sooner kill myself than utter aloud what I have kept saying to myself these three months past—and that is, that I love you ! that I adore you ! that you are an angel—

CÉCILE.

It seems to me you say that very well.

DELILLE, *astonished at his audacity.*

Have I said anything ? Oh, forgive me ! Don't think of it any more. I didn't mean to—it slipped out—I'll never do it again—I swear—

CÉCILE, *quickly.*

Don't swear ! I do not require an oath ! You, timid, a lawyer ! How do you contrive to plead ?

DELILLE.

I don't. I tried once, and shall never try again.

CÉCILE.

Tell me about it.

DELILLE.

My aunt got me a client. Heaven knows, I never sought him. He was a very passionate man, and had once struck his wife with a stick.

CÉCILE, *reproachfully.*

And you defended the wretch ?

DELILLE.

Wait till you hear *how* I defended him ! The great day came. All my friends were in court. I had prepared a brilliant speech. I knew it by

heart. All at once there was an awful silence. The President bowed to me, and said courteously, "Will the counsel proceed?" I rose—I tried to speak—I couldn't utter a sound. Every eye was on me—the President invited me with a gesture to go on—my client called, "Speak! speak!" At last I made an almost superhuman effort—something rattled in my throat—then it seemed to burst, and I stammered out, "Messieurs, I solicit for the accused—the utmost severity of the law." Then I fell back into my seat.

CÉCILE.

And your client?

DELILLE.

Got what I solicited—six months in prison.

CÉCILE.

He deserved them.

DELILLE.

Yes, it was too little for what he made me suffer. I didn't take my fee—it's true he forgot to offer it. And now that you know my infirmity, tell me, how is it possible for me to ask your father for your hand?

CÉCILE.

I can't ask him to give it you.

DELILLE, *naively*.

No, I suppose that wouldn't do. Well, we must wait till aunt gets better.

CÉCILE, *quickly*.

Wait! Don't you know, papa has another offer?

DELILLE, *overwhelmed*.

Another!

CÉCILE.

Yes, and he's here, and he has papa's promise.

DELILLE.

Good gracious! So I have to face a struggle, a rival.

CÉCILE.

But I don't love him; and if I am forced to marry him, I shall die.

DELILLE.

Die! You! [*Boldly*] Where is your father? Send him to me.

CÉCILE.

You will ask him?

DELILLE, *heroically*.

I will!

CÉCILE.

I'll fetch him. [*Going.*] Courage! Courage!
[*Exit at back.*]

DELILLE, *alone.*

Yes, I will ask him ; that is, not directly—I'll write. I write a very *bold hand*. [*Sitting.*] This is the thing—a letter does not blush and tremble. [*Writes rapidly as he speaks.*] I did not know I was so eloquent. [*Folds and addresses note*] “A Monsieur Carbonel.” [*Unconsciously puts a stamp on.*] There ! Now it's all right.

CARBONEL, *outside.*

Keep them fresh. He'll take them soon.

DELILLE, *frightened.*

He, already ! I can't give him this. Ah, I'll put it in front of the clock. [*Puts letter before clock and returns C.*]

CARBONEL, *entering at back and coming R.*

My dear friend, your grafts are ready.

DELILLE.

Thank you ! [*Aside*] He has not seen Cécile. [*Aloud*] On the clock. [*Points.*]

CARBONEL.

What did you say ?

DELILLE.

A letter. I'll return for the answer.

[*Exit quickly at back.*]

CARBONEL.

On the clock—a letter ! [*He takes it.*]

CÉCILE, *entering L. I. E.*

Oh, papa, I've been looking for you. [*Astonished.*] But where is M. Delille ?

CARBONEL.

Just gone, but it seems he has written to me—on the clock.

CÉCILE.

What ?

CARBONEL.

Yes, it is for me—see, he has put a stamp on. [*Reads*] “Monsieur, I love your daughter ; no, I do not love her—”

CÉCILE.

Eh ?

CARBONEL, *continuing.*

“I adore her—” [*To Cécile*] Go away, you must not hear this !

CÉCILE.

But I know it, papa.

CARBONEL.

Oh, I suppose that makes it all right. [*Reading*] “I adore her.” [*Speaking*] How did you know it ?

CÉCILE.

He told me.

CARBONEL.

Very improper on his part.

CÉCILE.

Go on ! what else does he say ?

CARBONEL, *reading*.

“ You can offer me but two things—her hand or the grave.” [*Speaking*] Since he gives me a choice, I’ll let him have the grave.

CÉCILE.

Oh, dear papa, when you say you love me so much ! [*Kisses him.*]

CARBONEL, *aside*.

Lucky Delille ! [*Aloud*] But what can I say to Garadoux ?

CÉCILE.

Yes, I see—you’re too timid—

CARBONEL.

Timid ! I ! Nonsense ! One man’s as good as another.

CÉCILE.

Certainly—if you except Garadoux !

CARBONEL.

I’m not afraid of him, and I know exactly what to say to him. By the way, what ought I to say ?

CÉCILE.

Don't *say* anything; follow M. Delille's example—write:

CARBONEL.

I will. [*Sits.*] Here is a very *firm pen*.
[*Writing*] "Dear monsieur—" [*To Cécile*]
What next?

CÉCILE, *dictating*.

"Your suit flatters—"

CARBONEL, *writing*.

"And honors me—" [*Speaking*] Let us soften the blow.

CÉCILE, *dictating*.

"But I regret it is impossible to accord you my daughter's hand."

CARBONEL, *writing*.

"Daughter's hand." [*Speaking*] That isn't enough. I must give a reason.

CÉCILE.

I'll give one; go on. [*Dictating*] "I beg you to believe that, in writing this, I only yield with the greatest reluctance to considerations entirely private and personal, which in no way lessen the esteem I shall always entertain for you." [*Speaking*] Now sign!

CARBONEL.

You call that a reason?

CÉCILE.

A diplomatic one; it may mean everything or nothing.

GARADOUX, *outside*.

Take that to my room.

CARBONEL.

His voice !

CÉCILE.

I leave you.

CARBONEL.

No, don't. What am I to do with this?
[*Indicating letter.*]

CÉCILE.

Ring for Annette, and bid her give it to M.
Garadoux. Now, *au revoir*, you dear, good papa.
[*Kisses him, and exit L.*]

CARBONEL.

She's a spoilt child ! Now for Annette !
[*Rings.*]

GARADOUX, *entering at back*.

Well, papa, are you not ready yet ? We
ought to be at the mayor's now.

CARBONEL.

Yes. [*Aside*] If that stupid Annette would
but come. [*Aloud*] While waiting, I have writ-
ten a very important letter.

GARADOUX, *not listening.*

I'll tell you a secret, but not a word to your daughter. They have come !

CARBONEL.

Who have come ?

GARADOUX.

My presents for her.

CARBONEL, *aside.*

He has bought the presents.

GARADOUX, *polishing his nails.*

You shall see them—they're superb—particularly a pair of bracelets. [*Aside*] I must have broken that nail, watering. [*Aloud*] They're blue enamel and gold.

CARBONEL.

Blue and gold ! [*With great effort*] The letter I have just written—

GARADOUX.

I have not forgotten you, papa. [*Taking box from pocket.*] A souvenir—a snuff-box. Style Louis XV., guaranteed.

CARBONEL, *touched.*

Oh, monsieur, my—my dear son-in-law, you are too good.

GARADOUX.

Dear papa, you know how fond I am of you.

CARBONEL.

And I of you. [*Aside*] It's impossible to give such a letter to a man who presents one with such a snuff-box.

GARADOUX.

Twelve o'clock. The mayor will be waiting !

CARBONEL.

In a moment. I must change my cravat.

GARADOUX.

And I my coat. [*Aside*] Devil take that nail !
[*Exit L. 2 E.*]

CARBONEL, *alone.*

I couldn't do it. I must tear this up. And the other—he's coming for my answer. [*Looks at letter.*] No address ! and I didn't put any name in the letter. [*Going to table.*] I'll direct it to Delille—Cécile can't marry both—and Garadoux has bought his presents. [*Reads*] "To Monsieur Victor Delille." Now for a stamp. [*Rises.*] And now to put it on the clock. [*Places letter on the clock.*]

DELILLE, *entering at back.*

It is only I !

CARBONEL.

On the clock !

[*Exit L. I. E.*]DELILLE, *alone.*

On the clock ! Hasn't he read it ? [*Takes letter.*] Yes ! this is the answer. I scarcely dare open it. [*Reads*] "Dear monsieur : Your suit flatters and honors me—" [*Speaks*] How kind he is ! [*Reads*] "But I regret it is impossible to accord you my daughter's hand." [*Falling on chair.*] Refused ! I knew it !

CÉCILE, *entering at back.*

Monsieur Victor, have you seen—

DELILLE.

Your father ? I have. There is his answer.
[*Gives letter.*]

CÉCILE.

What, my letter ! This wasn't meant for you !

DELILLE, *pointing at address.*

It's directed to me.

CÉCILE.

This is outrageous. I shall have to attend to this affair myself. I'll let you all see *I* am not timid. Send for a carriage. Quick !

DELILLE.

A carriage ! For whom ?

CÉCILE.

You'll know by and by. Go !

DELILLE.

I fly ! [*Aside*] What energy !

[*Exit quickly at back.*]

CÉCILE.

Papa shall not break his word to me like this.
[*Takes her shawl and bonnet from a chair at back.*]

CARBONEL, *entering L. I. E.*

I've put on my cravat. [*Sees Cécile.*] Where are you going ?

CÉCILE, *tying her bonnet.*

Away ! I leave you for ever ! I am about to immure myself in a convent.

CARBONEL.

Eh !

CÉCILE.

A damp and cold one, where I shall not live long. But you will not care, for you did not love me enough to save me from a man I hate.

CARBONEL.

But it's impossible ! He's bought his presents. Lovely ones, including a Louis XV. snuff-box for me.

CÉCILE.

So you have sacrificed me to a snuff-box.
Farewell, cruel father !

CARBONEL.

It is no sacrifice ! He is a charming young man ; and in the end you will learn to—besides, he's dressing to go to the mayor's.

CÉCILE.

Tell him you can't accompany him. Say you're ill. [*She takes off bonnet and shawl.*]

CARBONEL.

Ah ! that is a good idea ; but he was here five minutes ago.

CÉCILE.

People can die in less time than that. Say it's a rush of blood ! [*Calling*] Annette, hurry, bring papa's dressing-gown !

CARBONEL.

No, no ! I don't want it.

ANNETTE, *entering with dressing-gown.*

What is the matter ?

CÉCILE.

Nothing serious. Bring some *eau sucrée*. [*Helping Carbonel with gown.*] Put this on !

CARBONEL.

I don't like playing such a part.

CÉCILE.

Never mind ! now the other sleeve !

CARBONEL.

And, look here, I won't say a word. You'll have to manage it all.

CÉCILE.

I know that. [*Making him sit in arm-chair.*]
Annette—a foot-stool and a cushion.

ANNETTE, *bringing them.*

Here, mademoiselle.

CÉCILE.

I hear him. [*Takes glass and stands by her father.*]

GARADOUX, *entering with hat.*

Now we're all ready. [*Seeing Carbonel.*] Ah !
what has happened ?

CÉCILE.

Papa has had a sudden—

GARADOUX.

What ?

CÉCILE.

Rush of blood. He is suffering greatly. It

will be impossible for him to go out to-day. Will it not, papa ?

CARBONEL, *aside*.

I protest by my silence.

GARADOUX.

Poor M. Carbonel ! I think it would be well to apply some leeches.

ANNETTE.

Yes, I'll go for some.

CARBONEL.

No, no !

CÉCILE, *quickly*.

This is better for him. [*Gives him glass.*]
Drink, papa. [*He drinks.*]

GARADOUX.

It doesn't do to take liberties with one's health.
[*Trimming his nails.*] Health is like a fortune—
not really appreciated till it's lost.

CARBONEL, *aside*.

I wonder how long I'm to be smothered up here.

CÉCILE, *to Garadoux*.

These attacks of papa's generally last several days ; and if, by chance, your affairs call you to Paris—

GARADOUX.

I couldn't think of leaving M. Carbonel while he is ill.

CARBONEL, *aside*.

An excellent young man !

GARADOUX.

Besides, this need not delay our marriage. I can go alone to the mayor.

CÉCILE.

Eh ?

GARADOUX.

M. Carbonel's presence is not absolutely necessary. He can give his consent in writing.

CÉCILE.

Papa is too fatigued now.

GARADOUX.

Oh, it's only a signature. [*Sitting at table.*] I'll write the body.

CÉCILE, *low*.

Don't sign !

GARADOUX, *bringing paper and pen*.

Sign here !

CARBONEL.

But—

CÉCILE.

What shall I do ? [*Takes inkstand and hides it behind her back.*]

CARBONEL.

Where is the inkstand ?

GARADOUX, *after looking on table.*

Mademoiselle is kind enough to hold it for you.

CARBONEL.

Thank you, my dear child. [*He dips pen.*]

CÉCILE, *aside.*

All hope is gone !

DELILLE, *entering running, at back.*

The carriage is at the door.

GARADOUX.

What carriage ?

DELILLE, *astonished.*

What ! Monsieur Garadoux !

GARADOUX, *aside.*

Devilish unfortunate !

DELILLE.

You have been well since—

GARADOUX, *quickly*.

Perfectly !

CARBONEL.

So you know one another ?

DELILLE.

Yes, I had the honor to defend monsieur—he was my first client.

CÉCILE.

Ah ! [*To Carbonel, low*] Imprisoned for six months !

CARBONEL, *rising in consternation*.

What's this ? [*To Garadoux*] You have been in prison ?

GARADOUX.

It was nothing—a quarrel—in a moment of excitement—

CÉCILE.

Monsieur struck his first wife with a stick.

ANNETTE, *coming L. C.*

Oh, the villain ! [*Puts back chair and foot-stool.*]

CARBONEL.

My poor Cécile ! [*To Garadoux*] Go, sir ! Leave this house, you wife-beater ! Take away your presents. Here is your snuff-box. [*Offers his old horn one.*]

GARADOUX.

Excuse me, that is not the right one.

CARBONEL, *with dignity giving the other.*
There it is !—you may keep the snuff I put in it.

GARADOUX.

I am glad, monsieur, that this little incident
has so quickly restored you. [*Going, to Delille*]
Idiot ! [*Exit L. 2 E.*]

CARBONEL.

What was that he said ?

CÉCILE, *low to Delille.*

Now then, ask him at once. Put on your
gloves.

DELILLE.

But isn't it—

CÉCILE.

Don't be afraid. He's more timid than you.

DELILLE, *bravely.*

Oh, he's timid, is he ? [*Begins to put on gloves.*]

CÉCILE, *low to Carbonel.*

He's going to ask for my hand. Put on your
gloves.

CARBONEL.

But isn't it—

CÉCILE.

Don't be afraid. He's more timid than you.

CARBONEL, *bravely*.

Oh, he's timid, is he? [*Puts on gloves.*]

DELILLE, *boldly*.

Monsieur!

CARBONEL, *same manner*.

Monsieur!

DELILLE, *resolutely*.

For the second time, I ask for your daughter's hand.

CARBONEL.

Monsieur, you ask in a tone—

DELILLE, *sternly*.

It is the tone I choose to use, monsieur.

CARBONEL, *same manner*.

Then I am happy to grant your request, monsieur.

DELILLE.

But you grant it in a tone—

CARBONEL, *sternly*.

It is the tone I choose to use, monsieur.

DELILLE.

Monsieur!!!

CARBONEL.

Monsieur!!!

CÉCILE, *coming between them.*

[*Aside*] They'll quarrel in a minute. [*Aloud*] Monsieur Victor, papa hopes you will stay to dinner. That was what you wished to say, wasn't it, papa?

CARBONEL.

I suppose so! But mind, he mustn't break any glasses. [*Aside*] I'll make him try the new wine.

CÉCILE.

Oh, I'll answer for him. He has nothing more to be nervous about now. Have you, Victor?

DELILLE.

I am not quite sure about that, Cécile.

CÉCILE.

Do you know, I have never felt nervous till now? [*To the audience*] You have seen these two timid people—well, I am just as timid as they were, and we shall all remain in the same unhappy state, until we receive the assurance of your approval.

CURTAIN.



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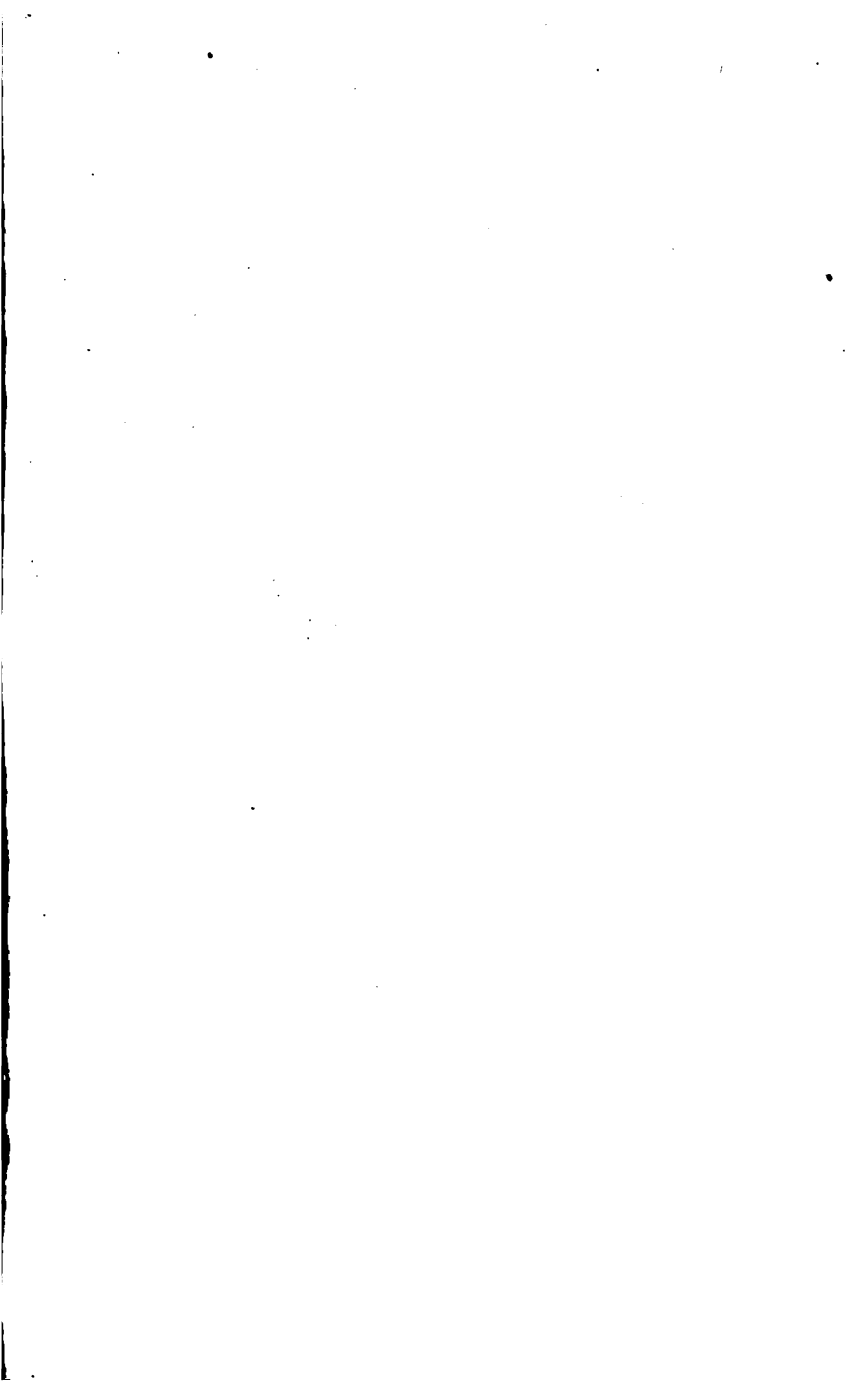
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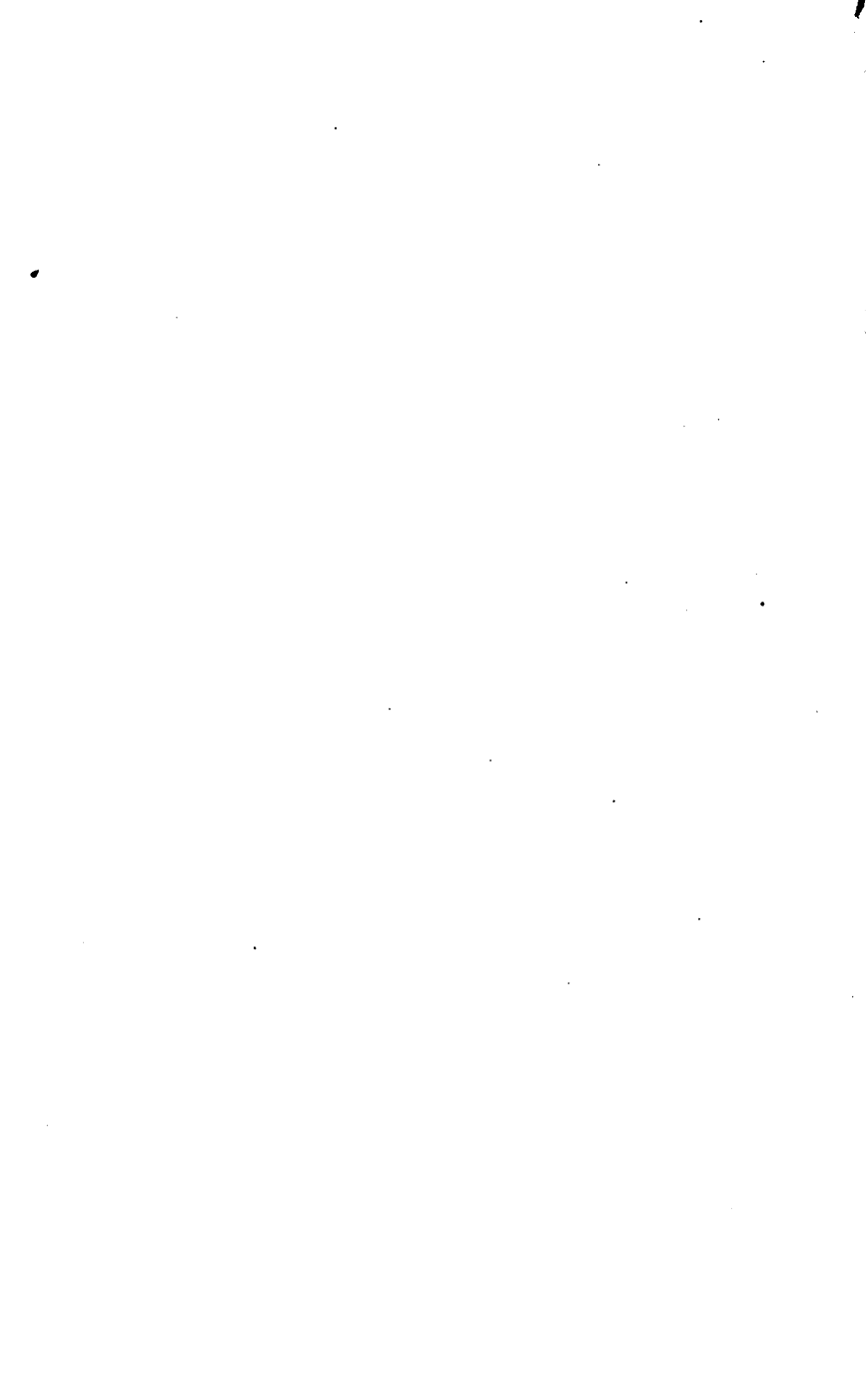
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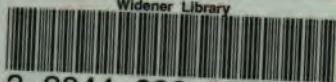


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